

Thursday, December 21, 2017

Dear Governor Cuomo,

We are writing to ask that you increase the budget for the Department of Environmental Conservation in the FY18-19 New York State Budget, in order to restore staff positions. These positions are needed to advance your environmental agenda, continue to position New York State as a leader nationally on clean water issues, and provide a needed backstop against anticipated federal cuts.

Specifically, as Waterkeepers devoted to protection and restoration of New York State's waters, we urge you to provide staff needed to restore positions in the Divisions of Water, Environmental Remediation, Fish & Wildlife, and Marine Resources.

Collectively, these divisions are down 170 full time equivalent positions -- 15% -- since 2008. The Division of Water has experienced the steepest decline over that 10-year period, with a loss of 58 positions, or 21%. Just through 2017, these divisions are down 32 positions, a loss of 3%. (Please see Attachment.)

Your leadership has produced historic achievements that are making New York State a leader on water issues. These achievements include the signing of the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act, the Clean Water Infrastructure Act and the Emerging Contaminant Monitoring Act, and the establishment of the Drinking Water Council and Water Quality Rapid Response Team.

As you know, water quality issues are growing more numerous and complex in our state, as exemplified by the public drinking water supplies that have been contaminated with unregulated chemicals and toxins associated with harmful algal blooms.

The Department of Environmental Conservation has a central role in the state's response to emerging issues such as these, and as importantly, to the implementation of proactive strategies to protect drinking water at its source, build community resiliency to climate change, and ensure that our natural environment remains a foundation of regional tourism economies. Clean water and healthy aquatic ecosystems are central to public health, quality of life, and recreation for residents and visitors alike, including sportsmen and women, people with disabilities and environmental justice communities.

Please include robust increases to staffing levels at the Department of Environmental Conservation in your FY2018-2019 budget, to ensure that the capable and dedicated men and women have the support they need to protect and restore the waters of New York State.

Sincerely,

Paul Gallay
President and Hudson Riverkeeper
Riverkeeper, Inc.



Jill Jedlicka
Executive Director & Riverkeeper
Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper



Chris Navitsky
Lake George Waterkeeper
Fund for Lake George



Sean O'Neill
Executive Director and Baykeeper
Peconic Baykeeper



Lee Willbanks
Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper and
Executive Director
Save the River



Bill Lucey
Long Island Soundkeeper
Save The Sound/CT Fund for the
Environment



Debbie Mans
Executive Director and Baykeeper
NY/NJ Baykeeper



Attachment

STAFFING LEVELS OVER TIME

Division	2008 April	2009 April	2010 April	2011 April	2012 April	2013 April	2014 April	2015 April	2016 April	2017 April	2017 Nov
Water	278	275	256	220	232	236	238	234	227	231	220
Environmental Remediation	406	390	375	411	411	402	389	386	379	372	354
Fish, Wildlife & Marine Resources	432	415	398	351	359	365	360	348	361		
Marine Resources										67	66
Fish and Wildlife										308	306
TOTALS	1116	1080	1030	982	1001	1003	987	968	966	978	946

STAFFING LEVEL CHANGES OVER TIME

Division	Change From 2008	% Change From 2008	Change Through 2017	% Change Through 2017
Water	-58	-21%	-11	-5%
Environmental Remediation	-52	-13%	-18	-5%
Fish, Wildlife & Marine Resources				
Marine Resources	-60	-14%	-3	-1%
Fish and Wildlife				
TOTALS	-170	-15%	-32	-3%

STAFFING CHANGES OVER TIME, BY DIVISION

